

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT UP AND GET OFF EASY

Going up and down stairs or curbs are some of the scariest situations for frail adults. These limitations can seriously limit mobility, opportunities, and independence. Often-times, too, one leg functions better than the other. These two activities, Put Your Best Foot Up and Get Off Easy, provide easy rules for negotiating stairs or curbs when legs do not function equally.

Benefits »

- ◉ Teaches an easy way to remember which foot to use when.
- ◉ Practices an everyday mobility skill.

Set It Up »

Place a single step beside balance support. Four inches (10 centimeters) is a good first step height. You can add risers later.

How to Do It »

Discuss the safest way to go up and down stairs—up with the good foot and down with the bad foot. Ask participants to volunteer whether they have one leg that works better than the other. It's common, so you'll likely get lots of responses. This activity is for them.

Put Your Best Foot Up

Use the following cues.

- ◉ Place your best foot on the step.
- ◉ Shift your weight (think Belly Button Training) toward and over the foot on the step. (Belly Step style.)
- ◉ Push down on that foot and lift yourself onto the step.
- ◉ Bring the other foot onboard. Stop and get your balance. Step back down carefully.
- ◉ Practice several times. Change feet if the other leg is capable.
- ◉ Stay on top of the step for the next activity.



Get Off Easy

Now they'll practice stepping off with the weaker leg. Explain to participants that the stronger leg should stay on the step to control the lowering of their weight. This technique makes it easier to get off the step. Use the following cues.

- ◉ Start on top of the step.
- ◉ Lower your weaker leg to the floor. Toe down first is usually easiest.
- ◉ Keep your weight on the strong leg until the other foot touches down.
- ◉ Transfer your weight down to the floor.
- ◉ Are you aware you can control the descent with the stronger leg? That is why you leave the stronger leg on the stair. Step down with the weaker leg because the other one maintains control.
- ◉ Lift the leg back up and try it again.

Keep It Safe »

Supervise participants closely for wobbliness. Provide plenty of balance support. Watch for signs of pain in their faces when they step up or down. If they look uncomfortable or wince, then remind them that they should modify or stop the activity if it hurts.

Live It »

Participants should put their best foot up first when stepping up onto a curb or stair. Getting off easy means stepping down from a stair or curb with the less capable leg.